

## **NUMBER OF JOURNALISTS JAILED WORLDWIDE CONTINUES TO RISE**

**by  
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**WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 14** -- The number of journalists imprisoned worldwide for their work has increased for the second straight year, with about a third of the jailed journalists involved in Internet dissemination of information, according to the global press advocacy group the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).

The New York-based CPJ said its annual worldwide census found that 134 journalists were imprisoned on December 1, an increase of nine from the 2005 survey. Of the total, some 49 Internet journalists were imprisoned in 2006, the highest number CPJ has tallied in its annual survey.

China, Cuba, Eritrea and Ethiopia were the top four jailers among the 24 nations that imprisoned journalists, said the CPJ in a December 7 statement.

"Anti-state" allegations such as subversion, divulging state secrets and acting against the interests of the state are the most common charges used to imprison journalists worldwide, said the CPJ, adding that 84 journalists are jailed under these charges, many by the Chinese, Cuban and Ethiopian governments.

But the CPJ also found an increasing number of journalists held without any charge or trial at all. Some 20 imprisoned journalists have been denied even the most basic elements of due process, the CPJ found. The press group said Eritrea, which accounts for more than half of the cases where no charges are made, keeps journalists in secret locations and withholds basic information about their well-being.

For the eighth consecutive year, China is the world's leading jailer of journalists, with 31 imprisoned. Nineteen cases involve Internet journalists.

Cuba ranked second on the list, with 24 reporters, writers and editors behind bars, most of them jailed in the country's massive March 2003 crackdown on dissidents and the independent press, said the CPJ. Nearly all of those on Cuba's list had filed news and commentary to overseas Web sites. These journalists used phone lines and faxes, not computers, to transmit their reports. Once posted, their articles were seen across the world but almost never in Cuba, where the government heavily restricts Internet access.

Another press advocacy group, the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders, has put both China and Cuba on its list of 15 countries that are "enemies" of the Internet. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Feb/03-300372.html> ).)

Regarding Cuba, the U.S. State Department's Cuban affairs office said in a November 27 statement to USINFO that Reporters Without Borders has called Cuba "one of the top worst countries for journalists," and that more than 330 prisoners of conscience continue to languish in Cuban jails. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=November&x=200611281552291xeneerg0.9977686> ).)

The United States has been in the forefront in opposing governments around the world that seek to repress dissent on the Internet. A State Department initiative, the Global Internet Freedom Task Force, is considering the foreign policy aspects of Internet freedom, including the use of technology to track and repress dissidents and to restrict access to political content. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=February&x=20060214161400bcreklaw3.503054e-02&t=xarchives/xarchitem.html> ).)

The CPJ survey found that Eritrea -- with 23 jailed journalists -- leads Africa in the number of journalists in prison. These journalists are being held incommunicado, and their well-being is a growing source of concern, said the CPJ.

CPJ Executive Director Joel Simon said that in Cuba and China, journalists often are jailed after summary trials and held in "miserable conditions far from their families. But the cruelty and injustice of imprisonment is compounded where there is zero due process and journalists slip into oblivion. In Eritrea, the worst abuser in this regard, there is no check on authority and it is unclear whether some jailed journalists are even alive."

Ethiopia has imprisoned 18 journalists, most of whom are being tried for treason after being swept up by authorities in a November 2005 crackdown on dissent, although a CPJ investigation found no basis for the government's treason charges.

Regarding the high number of imprisoned Internet journalists, Simon said that now is a "crucial" time in the fight for press freedom "because authoritarian states have made the Internet a major front in their effort to control information. China is challenging the notion that the Internet is impossible to control or censor, and if it succeeds there will be far-ranging implications, not only for the medium but for press freedom all over the world."

The CPJ said its survey is only a "snapshot" of those journalists incarcerated as of December 1 and does not include the many journalists imprisoned and released throughout 2006.

The survey ( <http://www.cpj.org/> ) is available on the CPJ Web site.

The repression against journalists worldwide is also documented in the State Department's "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices ( <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/index.htm> )" for 2005.

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*Note: A Bangla translation of this article is also available from the American Center. If you are interested in the translation, please call the American Center Press Section (Tel: 8837150-4, Fax: 9885688; e-mail: [DhakaPA@state.gov](mailto:DhakaPA@state.gov); Website: [http:// dhaka.usembassy.gov](http://dhaka.usembassy.gov))*